

BOOK REVIEW

Arieti, Silvano, M.D.: *The Will to Be Human*. New York, Quadrangle, 1972. 279 pp. \$8.95.

To explain its apparently puzzling and almost paradoxical title, it should be said at once that this volume deals with a number of very broad and basic issues, far beyond the field of psychiatry. Early in his work the author states his point clearly: "For me, what man does represents the complicated influence of the external world, but it also represents his choice to the extent he has the possibility of making it, his creativity to the degree he is endowed with it, and his responsibility in the way he is able to experience it. Accordingly, what man does reveals implicitly or explicitly what he means and how he feels."

As anyone can see, this statement is at variance with the basic tenets of both the behavioristic school—of late, represented especially by Skinner's work—and the Freudian school, theoretically at opposite poles but unified in their deterministic assumptions. Using a broad and critical approach, Arieti proceeds toward his goal, not sparing his attacks on both fronts. His goal, indeed, may appear almost submerged under the variety of issues, all presented with wealth of information ranging from neurophysiology to literature, history and, of course, psychoanalysis. But the theme of the humanity—and humanism—of man is pervasive and convincing when not polemic, even if it runs counter to some of the most powerful clichés of our present civilization.

In his role of gentle persuader the author shifts levels quite often, from the literary and allegoric to the philosophical and theological, so that the presentation never becomes too heavy. He uses the story of Pinocchio as a sounding board for the testing of important tenets related to the development of the personality. Or rather, it serves as one side (the earthly) of the sounding board, the other one (the divine) being represented by the Biblical story of Jonah.

Because of the breadth and complexity of the issues discussed in the book and the essaylike type of presentation, it is difficult to give a thorough description in a review. Only some of the main points can be touched upon here. To begin with, thinking is a prerequisite for willing, ideas are motivational forces, wish has been disregarded in

psychological literature (possibly because of the identification of the will with Victorian morality in the early psychoanalytic literature), and society exercises a great deal of repression on human beings, yet the solution is not in the liberation of the id à la Reich or of sexuality à la Marcuse.

In discussing the "endocratic power": i.e., the power which gives orders from inside, the author begins with Erikson's notion of trust and then offers a balanced account of the positive and negative aspects of endocracy. The latter are described later in detail, especially as "surplus power" (to which even Marx's "surplus value" can be reduced) and the characteristics of uncontrolled power (typical of the Fascists and Nazis) are presented clearly: power has a self-accruing quality, uncontrolled power tends to become uncontrollable, fear of power becomes as frightening as power itself, the distance between the holder of power and the power-deprived citizens is increased and, finally, the personality of the subordinates is changed drastically.

No matter how appealing these ideas are, the reader should not lose track of the psychological insights offered by Dr. Arieti, as "oughtness is not noumenal but endocratic or psychological in nature" (p. 90). Dr. Arieti relates power to anxiety stemming from fear of others and to dissatisfaction with oneself, leading to the creation of scapegoats. As typical examples of this phenomenon, which has occurred in the last two centuries in Western civilization, the author discusses slavery, colonialism, and concentration camps. Even more relevant to the present scene is the discussion of today's youth, divided into the three groups: 1) newly committed (unfortunately, not many), 2) alienated (in the sense of Keniston or "other directed" in the sense of Riesman), and 3) "Pinocchioans" (who want to be rather than to become, who hate science and embrace drugs). As causes for this state of things, confusion of parental roles, the easy expectation of material goods, and excessively permissive educational methods are mentioned.

It is probable that many readers may not agree entirely with Dr. Arieti's broad statement on the interplay of cultural authority and history, in particular the presentation of classical culture and Christianity as opposed to each other, and on the delay caused by the endocratic power of certain sociocultural forces in allowing psychoanalytic discoveries to come to the surface. In apparent contradiction to the author's position, slavery, for instance—as he, himself, admits—was much

more of a problem in the "democratic" United States than in the "autocratic" Latin American countries. It is also worth noting that no mention whatsoever is made of Schopenhauer, the philosopher of the will.

But these are only minor points. Dr. Arieti's strength emerges again in his presentation of the will in psychiatric disorders: i.e., in psychopathic, obsessive-compulsive, and catatonic patients. Also convincing are his contentions that the psychological aspects of the will have not been investigated properly and that there is no incompatibility between psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and ethics. Even more appealing is his last chapter, which deals with originality and creativity. Here he further clarifies important notions presented in previous publications.

The very final statement in the volume, the author's identification with Jonah, is the last presentation of an autobiographical motive which constitutes an underlying pervasive theme. Very close to his heart also is the antitotalitarianism and the defense of reason, two basic motifs which often appear in the volume in opposition to the prevailing role of emotions, even if the latter finds support in the classic psychoanalytic doctrine. As a matter of fact, the author, a renowned exponent of neo-Freudianism, does not spare criticism of this doctrine in vital points, such as universality of the Oedipal situation, the notion of libido, the genesis of the superego, and the postulate of the death instinct.

In view of its broad scope, this book is of relevance to many, over and above psychiatry, psychology, and related fields. It is a message of humanism and reason to a world which appears increasingly to be dominated by obscure forces of irrationality and despair. Armed with a long psychiatric experience and with a rare intellectual grasp, Dr. Arieti has succeeded in this new endeavor to share his innermost thoughts on many vital issues which, doubtless, occupy—and preoccupy—many persons in our times. We should be grateful to him for not having hesitated to approach in a comprehensible way the arduous theme of the will, and for using a multiple perspective, ranging from biological anlage to metaphysical dimensions. His timely plea will certainly be heard and echoed by many.

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Correction

With reference to Schulman, H.: A critical analysis of induced abortion. *Bull. N.Y. Acad. Med.* 49: 694-701, 1973. The fifth sentence in the second paragraph on page 696 should have read: Other serious complications were bowel obstruction, 1.1%, and disruption or infection, 3%.